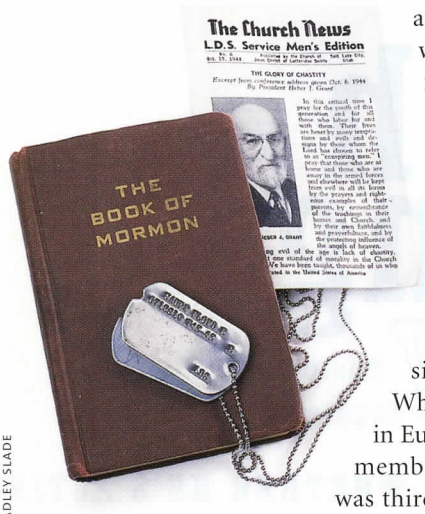
From the archive have grown a book, *Saints at War: Experiences of Latter-day Saint Veterans during World War II* (Covenant, 2001); a KBYU documentary; a veterans conference held on campus in November 2001; and an online collection of selected stories (www.saintsatwar.org).

Saints at War, which recently expanded to include the Korean conflict, the Vietnam War, and later conflicts of the 20th century, is an official partner of the Veterans History Project underway in the Library of Congress. "Saints at War serves as a focal point and established repository for materials from this underdocumented group," says Sarah Dashiell Rouse, program officer for the Veterans History Project.

More than 100,000 Latter-day Saints served in the armed forces during World War II at a time when Church membership had not quite reached 1 million. More than 5,000 Saints perished during the war, which claimed more than 50 million lives on all sides of the conflict.

The stories often have a spiritual bent and run the gamut—including stories of protection, loss, and guidance. They tell of soldiers stealing quiet moments to study their servicemen's scriptures. They describe spontaneous sacrament meetings held in bombed-out buildings, leaky tents, open fields, and even prisoner-of-war camps. They reveal methods LDS soldiers used to seek each other out—word of mouth, scribbled leaflets, and official invitations. One creative LDS chaplain added to the standard Christian crosses painted on his jeep a beehive, an angel Moroni, and the word *deseret* as clues for LDS servicemen and women.



BRADLEY SLADE

Along with its focus on Latter-day Saints, the archive is unusual because it documents veterans from several nationalities on both sides of the conflict. When the war erupted in Europe in 1939, Church membership in Germany was third only to the United States and Canada. More than 500 German Latter-day Saints lost their lives in World War II.

Hans Max Boettcher, a veteran of the German Army, recalls his experience with other Latter-day Saints while at an Allied prisoner-of-war camp in the Italian mountains. Boettcher had served a full-time mission and had married a young LDS woman before being drafted. The only LDS prisoner in his camp,

ROLAND WRIGHT

Latter-day Saint pilot Roland R. Wright (second from left) poses with his crew on the wing of the Mormon Mustang *in 1944 or 1945. Wright and other LDS servicemen and women received special servicemen's editions of the Book of Mormon and the* Church News *(below).*

Boettcher learned that an old LDS friend was in a nearby camp. He was able to make contact with his friend, who in turn put him in touch with an American LDS chaplain, Royden C. Braithwaite, '37. From their first meeting, records Boettcher, "[He] came every Sunday and picked me up for sacrament meeting in town."

"These men and women didn't set aside their religious conviction," Wright says. "Even though they were carrying rifles and machine guns, they still found time to read their scriptures, take the sacrament, say their prayers, and share the gospel. In the most trying circumstances, their spiritual life did not end. In fact it became their sustaining force."

In that way, says Freeman, the stories in the Saints at War archive become relevant to our lives today. "They not only give us the stories we want to know about their war experiences, but they also give us a pattern for living."

—Lisa Ann Jackson, '95

Lisa Ann Jackson is an editor for the Liahona *magazine and a freelance writer.*

INFO: Veterans or their families can contribute to the Saints at War archive by sending submissions to saintsatwar@byu.edu or by calling 801-422-2820. Readers can find out more about the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project at www.loc.gov/folklife/vets.